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Artifact Analysis of Ceramic Assemblage from the Golf Range Dump (40KN143) in Knoxville, Tennessee

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Abstract

The surface collection of ceramic artifacts from Golf Range Dump (40KN143) in Knoxville, Tennessee provides a snapshot of the times around 1940, the year the dump ceased to be in use. Hotel ware, porcelain, whiteware, and various other ware types were identified and catalogued in Table 1, with brief descriptions of their decorations and maker's marks. Each has been discussed and dated. Table 2 provided the mean ceramic date from the dates determined in the assemblage. Further research should be conducted into the dump's artifacts as well as a cross analysis with the glass collected at the time.

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Introduction

Dumps are ever increasing in a world where the population never slows down and trash can accumulate at alarming rates. At times, the dump reaches its maximum capacity and is left alone to sit, such as Golf Range Dump (40KN143) in Knoxville, Tennessee. At the time of the dump's use, America was between World War I and World War II and at the end of the Great Depression, a worldwide economic depression. The site was left alone and open to the elements in 1940, and it was not until 1998 that archaeologist Charles H. Faulkner of the University of Tennessee came to collect the artifacts lying on the surface. Within the collected material, I analyzed the ceramics (and some glass) for any information relevant to learning more about dinnerware use in the early twentieth century. A brief look into ware types identified will precede calculations for site dates determined by the Mean Ceramic Date and *Terminus Post Quem*.

There are 416 ceramic artifacts in the assemblage from Golf Range Dump with sixty-one pieces of milk glass (see Appendix A). After careful mending of as many pieces as possible, materials were identified. Unfortunately, many of the fragments are indeterminate due to material and ware types that were unfamiliar to me. Future further research into the unknown ware types would fill in the blanks for the database. This paper will analyze the artifacts from the assemblage and will not detail the site from which it came nor the history of trash dumps. No discussion will go into pattern identification unless patterns were easily discernable at initial observation and aided in

narrowing the date range of the assemblage. For complete identifications, reference Table 1.

Hotel ware

Eighty-seven fragments from the assemblage were identified as Hotel ware by the description given in Miller's article "Telling Time for Archaeologists" (Miller 2000). Of those artifacts, all could be separated into twenty-six distinct design types and were labeled "Set A" through "Set Z." Hotel ware is made by mold, fired and designed in a standardized method used in many industrial settings and was introduced in 1933 (Wind 1947: 2) (Miller 2000: 13). Many of the designs centered on a similar narrow banded green pattern along the rim, a very common hotel ware style that is still in use today. Many of the sets had maker's marks that were easily determined through research on a potter's marks database compiled for public use, such as Carr China Company, D.E. McNicols, Mayer China, and Jackson China (Birks 2002). Other companies, such as Syracuse China Company, have only just recently gone out of business. It is due to one set of hotel ware—a pair of tan bodied plates with a red wave on the rim—that the date range of the site (determined by the TPQ, discussed later) tightens to a finite point. On the bottom of one of the plates, a mark states, "Santone 1940," a clear manufacturing date for the vessels. Santone belonged to Warwick China Company, established in 1887 and lasted until 1973. None of the other ware had initial dates of manufacture later than 1940.

Whiteware

Another prominent material in the Golf Range Dump ceramic assemblage consists of whiteware with 115 pieces. Common in the American market after 1820 as a better and whiter ware than its predecessor, pearlware, this ware type is still in use today, which made for slight difficulty in narrowing the date range (Miller 2000: 13). It is due to the inclusion of the other ware types in the assemblage that the broad date range does not hinder the ability to determine the TPQ and the mean ceramic date. The primary style for the whiteware table and teawares include polychrome decal patterns of floral rims and a blue transfer-printed underglaze Willow pattern. The assemblage also includes transfer-printed underglaze patterns, hand-painted floral, and some transfer-printed ware with lustre paint and stenciling. Only one maker was determined for the entire whiteware ceramics group: Paramount for one of the polychrome transfer-printed overglaze floral patterned plates (Birks 2002). Many companies can claim the use of the Blue Willow pattern, and though the pattern dates back to 1795, whiteware did not begin production until 1805 and was not common on American sites until after 1820 (Miller 2000: 13). One piece from this material type is undecorated; every other piece has some form of decoration.

Porcelain

Eighty pieces of English Porcelain were determined by the impurities included in the material. All of the fragments, with the exception of sixteen pieces, had some form of decoration on them, the most prominent of that being transfer-print. Since Chinese porcelain was hard to come by due to the lowering of profits for Chinese exporters,

English porcelain began to develop in 1745 with the manufacturing of soft-paste porcelain, with other modifications to the process following soon after so that hard paste porcelain was in production by 1768 (Miller et al 2000: 9). One piece of porcelain stands out in that it is of Japanese porcelain. The indicator is the “Made in Japan” mark on the bottom of the plate and Miller indicated, “After 1921, Japanese porcelain could no longer be marked ‘Made in Nippon,’ but was to be marked ‘Made in Japan’” (2000: 9). It is possible there is other Japanese porcelain in the assemblage, but determination between English and Japanese is difficult. Another interesting inclusion with the porcelain could be identified as children’s porcelain. Nine small pieces of transfer-printed table and teawares were found. The most obvious presence of the younger generation, these pieces also have no maker’s mark, and designs that include floral and Willow patterns. Among the other unique artifacts were nine porcelain figurines of women and animals. No known creator of these figures was determined.

Unidentified Material (includes both coarse and refined earthenware)

Another large part of the assemblage is comprised of fragments that are unidentifiable in ware type and vessel form. Fifty-seven pieces of coarse and refined earthenware limit the possibility of an accurate date for the assemblage. Each fragment and vessel form is different, and that is where the identification ends. The only method of categorization for this section was to include decoration descriptions and mending. All are either coarse or refined earthenware. More time can be spent researching the forms of these vessels. Once ceramic manufacturing reaches standardization with machine-made pottery, many vessels are made by the same method, regardless of whether the vessel

came from the late nineteenth, early twentieth, or early twenty-first centuries. The most identifiable, most descriptive vessel is a light aqua ashtray from the Turner Douglas Shoppe that states “Snuf-a-Rette Trademark” on the bottom. This trademark was produced in 1937, but quickly died out of fashion (Soller 2000). It is a refined earthenware.

Other Ware Material (includes Stoneware, White Granite, Terra Cotta, Yellow ware and Fiesta ware)

Seventy-seven pieces from the Golf Range Dump comes from other ware material. Six pieces of terra cotta that mend to one flower pot can date back to 1848 when the material was first manufactured (Miller 2000: 11). There are eight fragments of brown stoneware that are a part of four different vessels. These are characterized by the thick, non-porous brown body of the vessel, non porous, dipped in a brown Albany slip or a white Bristol slip (Hildyard 1985: 15). One salt-glazed wheel-thrown stoneware gin container with a Bols&Zoon&Molyn mark on the front can be dated from 1850 until 1920, the years in which this company was in production (Comer 2004). One dark bodied stoneware mug has only a slip of blue, green and white covering it, so dating is indeterminate. There are also thirty-five pieces of white granite ware, distinctive by its heavy feel and slightly off-white glaze (Miller 2000: 13). Undecorated, these table and teawares are press-molded into designs and post-date to 1842. Also, utilitarian coarse yellow ware with various colored slips and decorative glazes in large mixing vessels are included. These were produced from 1830 until 1940 (Miller 2000: 12). Fiesta ware, produced by the initial designer Frederick Rhead of the Homer Laughlin Company in

1936 and continuing production until 1973, are the fragments characterized by the brightly colored monochrome glazes, styled after Mexican fiestas (Homer Laughlin Co: n. pag).

Dating Methods and Minimum Vessel Count

Dating methods were made possible by George Miller in the article “Telling Time for Archaeologists,” and the dates of production of the manufacturers determined by their marks. Once the dates were consolidated into a database, the mean ceramic date was calculated (see Table 2). Using the dates from 357 sherds with determinable date ranges, the products of the mean date and fragment count were found, added together, then divided by the fragment count. The date produced was 1923.

The TPQ of the assemblage is 1940, as per the date printed on the bottom of the hotel ware plate from Set D. No units were drawn during the surface collection, so the mean ceramic date and TPQ were determined with every ceramic fragment collected, which aided in making a more accurate date. The year 1940 was the last year in which Golf Range Dump was used, and 1940 is the earliest date of the youngest artifact.

Before any dates were determined, all artifacts were mended when possible. Within the assemblage, the minimum vessel count was calculated to be three hundred eighty-two.

Discussion

In archaeological context, Golf Range Dump provides a small glimpse into the fashions around 1940 (as determined by the TPQ). The site was still undergoing change

at late as 1940. Whiteware, porcelain, and hotel ware were almost evenly distributed across the surface of the dump in regards to number, suggesting that people were using them in the 1930's and before. The lack of more than a few samples of yellow ware and stoneware reflects the modernization of the times.

Studying the surface layer of a site provides a still photograph of life at any given point of time. Eleanor Breen wrote about trash excavation at Mount Vernon in her article "Whose Trash is it, Anyway?" and made a statement that can be compared to the analysis at Golf Range Dump. Breen wrote, "The systematic study of evidence contained in the layers of trash and soil...tells the story of household cycles and social aspirations of the Washington family" (2004: 326). In this case, household cycles cannot be truly looked into since the site was collected in just one layer, and since the layer includes all ceramics from numerous locations. Further excavation needs to be conducted to see those cycles and social aspirations of Knoxville citizens over the course of time. Until then, it is apparent from the assemblage that hotel ware, whiteware, and English porcelain are the most common ware types in Knoxville at the time of 1940. Due to the time period (at the end of the Great Depression), the presence of such a wide range of ware types would state that people were using whatever was available.

Conclusion

The surface collection of ceramic artifacts from Golf Range Dump (40KN143) in Knoxville, Tennessee provides a snapshot of the times around 1940, the year the dump ceased in use. Hotel ware, porcelain, whiteware, and various other ware types were identified and catalogued in Table 1, with brief descriptions of their decorations and

maker's marks. Each has been discussed and dated. Table 2 provided the mean ceramic date from the dates determined in the assemblage. The end of the Great Depression would have had an impact on the people and their wares. The use of the most common ware types such as whiteware may or may not have been the result of fashion, but certainly could be attributed to an ease of purchase. Further research should be conducted into the dump's artifacts as well as a cross analysis with the glass collected at the time.

Appendix A: Milk Glass

An odd inclusion into the assemblage is milk glass formed into table and teawares. Comprising sixty-one pieces of the total table and teaware assemblage, milk glass in dinnerware form came into production in 1825 in North America and is still in use today (Miller 2000: 8). The opaque material, caused by adding tin-oxide to the melted glass is fired and molded like other glass tablewares, with designs molded into the glass to the creator's desire (Kishimoto et al 2002: 6). Most of the pieces are undecorated with only the body being molded into desired form, but there are transfer-printed patterns on several of them. All of those designs are overglaze printing without a clear glaze to adhere the pattern to the vessel. Not much else is identifiable for these fragments due to a lack of maker's marks and non-discernable designs. Further research will help to pinpoint the production dates of these wares, which likely originated in the first decades of the twentieth century. The minimum vessel count for this small assemblage is forty-seven.

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